



Arlington Commission for Arts & Culture

Date: August 5, 2021

Time: 7:00-8:30pm

Location: Zoom

Minutes

Attending: Stewart Ikeda, Lidia Kenig-Scher, Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, Sarah Morgan-Wu, Christine Noah, Steve Poltorzycki, Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, Ali Carter, Adria Arch, Tom Davison

Absent: Andrea Nicolay, Tom Formicola, Beth Locke,

Guests: Cecily Miller, Nick Castellano (Grants Committee), Tomika Gotch

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm

1) ROLL CALL AND RULES OF REMOTE MEETINGS CONDUCTED DURING COVID-19

2) APPROVAL OF MAY MINUTES

- Minutes unanimously approved.

3) REMEMBRANCE OF CLIMATE FUTURES UPDATE

- Rachel Oliveri and Cecily Miller started with a plan for 8 interns. They brought in extra funding for four more interns. We have 12 interns. Some are active in other sustainability efforts and some are newer to this field but are artists or have other related interests.
- The project meets Mondays and Tuesdays. On Mondays, they go over assignments and on Tuesdays is a guest speaker. One was from MAPC and talked to them about Climate resiliency and mitigation, environmental justice and environmental activism. Other guests included Emily Sullivan, environmental planner and Ken Pruitt, the energy planner. The young people are blogging every week. Charles Coe came to talk to them about writing and doing blog posts. Part of the grant was to do research by talking to commissions, committees, and activist groups in Arlington. The youth got an introduction to the groups at a meet and greet and are choosing to go to their meetings and talk to them about climate change to generate ideas for the markers. The current idea is to do a wheatpaste this summer of the ideas, so they are looking for a wall. One student wrote a piece of about their tour of Food Link.
- The kids will build their own website which will link to Arts Arlington.

4) GRANTS COMMITTEE UPDATE

- The next grant cycle is getting started and the grants committee will be setting priorities similar to last year with a focus on DEIA work, Arlington institutions, Arlington artists and Arlington residents. Priorities need to be finalized by September. Many projects have happened recently or are happening in the next two weeks.
- A community input survey was sent out. They received a reasonable and helpful response.
- Because everything got pushed back a month, the Grants Committee decided that the grants reception will not happen this year, but they will do a huge reception this coming year that honors all the missed grant years due to COVID instead of the others.
- One of the priorities is to have COVID contingencies in their proposals.
- Ali reports that the state is getting around \$30 million dollars of COVID relief from American Rescue Plan. The State is getting Billions which they are advocating some to the Tourism board which may flow to the Cultural Facilities Fund, but that is it for now. The public process for

distributing those funds locally is go to the next Select Board meeting. Ali instructed that we read the Town Managers memo...

- Grantees are not posting their events on Arts Arlington. And it has been difficult to keep tabs on them through the liaisons. Part of the challenge is that LCC is now a direct grant rather than a reimbursement program, so the committee liaisons have less leverage.

5) STUDIO UPDATE

- 6 weeks ago, a group approached Lidia to say they want to use the space at 60 Lowell Street as a studio space.
- Lidia created a questionnaire, about what the group needed, collected references, etc. Lidia whittled it down to 8 people, but it fizzled because the landlord wanted one person to sign the lease and take responsibility. It is the same thing that happened at 23 Maple Street.
- Ali suggested Lidia to contact a reference she supplied who helps people form cooperatives.
- Lidia will try to create events for artists to get to know each other. How can we as a Commission help artists who are looking for rental space.
- Greater Goods continues to be a member of Artlinks. They are about to change the exhibition. Roasted Granola has approached Lidia to ask for the same thing.
- Artlinks has a new Feature artist on the website
- Question from Tom to Ali – Would a CBDG grant be appropriate to try to convert Lowell Street into this type of usage. Ali will check on it. The problem for the landlord is not only that it is a group rather than an individual. They want an entity that has been around for a while.
- Sara suggests that instead of creating a cooperative, we might be able to create a financial instrument like a Space Fund.
- Tom says it sounds like the perfect opportunity for a public-private partnership. It's location, and synergy with other community development plans make the building a good candidate.

6) CHAIRFUL UPDATE

- August 21, rain date: August 28 .
- Chairful this year is several events rolled into one. There will be 35 chairs and other types of furniture on the grounds of the Jason Russell House. And they will let us use their bathrooms. They have table and chairs and a tent, rented for free to town entities. There will also be an artist talk by Leslie Wilcox and live music arranged by Cristin. Artists are participating from Maine, the Cape and Boston. The quality is high. Adria is working on the Bidding Owl auction site. The auction will start at August 21st at noon and run until September 5th.
- MAPC will also work with public health officials to create guidelines around how to hold events safely
- We should spread the word about the survey and urge people to fill it out whether they are artists, arts organizations or creative businesses.
- Another resource: The Mass Cultural Council, has launched a recovery and renewal series targeted toward non-profit recovery. <https://massculturalcouncil.org/blog/introducing-the-recover-rebuild-renew-series>

7) VOTES FOR STEVE AS CO-CHAIR AND CRISTIN AS TREASURER

8) ALTERNATIVE RETREAT

- We had planned to tackle three major questions at our in-person retreat, but because of COVID, we are having to divide these up over our next few meetings and it will be a year of reassessing and re-strategizing for the future.
- First question is: How do we engage and sustain more people as commissioners, committee members and volunteers.

IDEAS:

- Grant reception – expand audience, recruit and engage them in some question or activity right then and there.
- We need to stop reporting in meetings and actively engage people by give them something to do.
- Write up a description of each Committee that we can share, and be more mindful about expectations so people can hit the ground running and be ready to participate. We should have a specific idea of the skills we are looking for.
- Pizza and Beer! Listen to people. What are they interested in?
- Go to other groups with affiliated interests where we can have regular quarterly or biannual conversations to broaden our relationships.
- People come because they want to be useful. Try to align meetings with people's interests, which is to be helpful and useful. Updates can be provided in writing in advance.
- Tomika reached out because she wanted to help the community and she loves art and she wanted to help Stewart with outreach to the Japanese community. People want to help with specific tasks.
- A great fertile ground for getting work done is to interact with other affiliated groups in town. People in other groups may want to also work with us.
- Good to have people take ownership of something without necessarily having to join committee meetings.
- Some type of programming is more volunteer-friendly than others. Maybe we think about having projects structured that way. Enlist people to document.
- Follow up with people who participated to the heights haiku to get them to sign up for newsletter and celebrate with them.
- Some people are motivated to help with things happening in their neighborhood.
- Volunteers come with their interests.
- We as Commissioners should attend as many events as possible that we create.
- We should have a Volunteer Coordinator. Every event should have a volunteer coordinator and volunteers to talk about ACAC and the project.
- Give tasks so people can point to that and say, "I did that". The importance of recognition. Having an opportunity to publicly thank and give recognition is important. The Heights Celebration had double benefit of publicity for ACAC and opportunity to recognize the poets.
- Artistic and volunteer appreciation events are key.
- A Volunteer Coordinator would be highly valuable to develop a turnkey communication channel for reaching out to volunteers.
- Many of the things mentioned are about building community.
- We are building community and bringing people together through the arts.
- Identify a few annual projects in which we could to build in community building and involvement.
- We also need someone skilled in documentation, to do social media posts, writing articles. This is a concrete need.
- Ways to include volunteers: We are doing something cool in your neighborhood, come help it happen and form a sense of community. The other way is to have more infrastructure, an administrative position. It is a challenging that we do not have a physical place.
- The marketing committee should have co-chairs, one of whom is not a Commissioner. We need to bring in outside experts who are not Commissioners so they don't burn out.

9) NEW BUSINESS

- There is a video from the Heights Haiku on ACMI
- The open space survey is live right now. It specifically has questions about arts in public parks. Emily says she hears that more than anything else when she facilitates meetings about the parks.
- There will also be a half hour video interview with Nilhou and Cecily, and Nilhou herself with five of her interviewees.

Meeting adjourned 9:10pm

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Marlin-Curiel

Next meeting: September 2, 7pm